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BRITISH AGRICULTURE.

MAY.

[Agricultural Emblems of the Month of May.—Selected from Saxon Calendars in Cotton and Lansdowne MSS.]

There is no other month in the year so universally hailed as the harbinger of joy and gladness as is the month of May. It seems in our favoured isle to be the general jubilee of nature—the season when the groves and fields again put on their gay green liveries, and animal existence everywhere rejoices in that all-pervading influence which manifests itself through the whole chain of created beings.

"The valley rings with mirth and joy;
Among the hills the echoes play
A never, never ending song,
To welcome in the May.
The magpie chatters with delight;
The mountain raven's youngling brood
Have left the mother and the nest,
And they go rambling east and west
In search of their own food,
Or through the glittering vapours dart
In very wantonness of heart.
* * * *
Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chants a joyous song;
The thrush is busy in the wood,
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks,
All newly born! Both earth and sky
Keep jubilee."*

The flocks and herds are again abroad, roaming the flowery pastures and cropping the tender herbage free and uncontrolled; while from every copse, grove, or blossoming hedge-row, is poured forth the joyous song of many a carolling warbler. The rustic ploughman too, as he "stalks a-field," whistles a blither strain, or chants some rural ditty with a heart more light and buoyant, for he feels that the pinching winter is past; and although teeming nature already begins to gladden the husbandman's heart with the favourable prospect of abundant crops at the appointed time of harvest, the sweltering heat of summer does not yet oppress him, for the genial breezes of the south are yet cooled and moistened with the showers of spring, and scented with the sweet fragrance of myriads of opening flowers.

"'Twas at the season when the earth up springs
From slumber, as a sphered angel's child,
Shadowing its eyes with green and golden wings,
Stands up before its mother bright and mild,
Of whose soft voice the air expectant seems;—
So stood before the sun, which shone and smiled
To see it rise thus joyous from its dreams,
The fresh and radiant earth. The hoary grove
Waxed green, and flowers burst forth like starry beams;
The grass in the warm sun did start and move."*

* Wordsworth's 'Idle Shepherd-boys, or Dungeon-Ghyll Force.'

Shelley—'Fragments.'

The rural gaieties and festivities formerly attendant upon the annual return of May—the ceremonials of weaving gay garlands of flowers to entwine and decorate the May-pole—the choosing and the installation of some rustic village beauty as the Queen of May—and even the dances on the village green—are one and all of them now nearly or wholly obsolete, and in some places quite forgotten. Indeed, in many extensive districts of country there is no longer a May-pole to be met with; and even in those counties where, in every village and hamlet, a tall tapering pole formerly might be seen, around which, during the summer evenings, the villagers would assemble—the young to dance or frolic in giddy mirth, while the older and more staid portion of the inhabitants told over the news and passing events of the day—but very few May-poles are now to be met with.

How frequently has "Oh, give me but a country life!" been sighed and responded to by those whose pursuits and occupations compel them to continue to inhale the impure atmosphere of our crowded towns and cities, but never more ardently than during the month of "rosy-fingered" May. There is one class of society, however (we have a reference to the highest and most fashionable circles), that barter the delights of the early summer month to capricious and tyrannical fashion—who, if we may be allowed the expression, turn night into day, and continue the bustle of what they denominate the town season until Midsummer is come, or probably past, before they return to their country seats and residences. For them the daisy-spangled lawn, the cowslip-gilded meadow, the hawthorn hedge-row, adorned with its numberless pink and white blossoms, that give to every passing breeze an aromatic fragrance, seem to possess no charms; neither are their hearts gladdened with the morning song of the merry lark, the softer melody of the thrush at the decline of day, or soothed with the lone and wild melody of the nightingale at the dull hour of midnight. That we are not only advocates but enthusiasts for the charms of a country life we are free to admit, but in that we are neither singular nor extravagant:—

"Bless'd land! though vernal tempests often howl,
And winter's wat'ry clouds on summer scowl;
Yet hence our brooks in even currents flow,
Nor their parch'd beds in early autumn show,
But ever full, the verdant foliage lave,
That hangs reflected o'er the glassy wave.
Hence too our trees, e'en on the mountain's brow,
In full viridity of foliage grow;
Nor mourn their shrivell'd roots and withered bowers,
When summer's suns exhale the vernal showers.
Hence too on pastures, rich in verdure, feed
The rising vigour of the martial steed;
With fatter juices make the milk-pail frothe,
And the meek sheep with warmer fleeces clothe." *

In those parts of the country where the cultivation of hops is a matter of some account with the farmers, it may be observed that now is the season when the hop-vines or bines begin to run, and therefore require the more particular attention of the husbandman:—

"Get into thy hop-yard, for now is the time
To teach Robin Hop on his pole for to climb;
To follow the sun, as his property is,
And weed him and trim him, if aught go amiss.
Grass, thistle, and mustard-seed, hemlock, and bur,
Tine, mallow, and nettle, that keep such a stur,
With peacock and turkey that nibble off top,
Are very ill neighbours to seely poor hop." †

Although most writers on the cultivation of the hop recommend a rich, deep, mellow, dry soil, rather inclining to sand than clay, yet in the Wealds of Kent and Sussex many of the hop-gardens (as the farmers usually designate their hop-grounds) are to be found on spots where the soil has originally been of a moory or somewhat boggy nature, but which, by the means of draining and ditching, has been reclaimed, ameliorated, and laid dry. Such plots of ground are commonly met with in low and sheltered situations; and notwithstanding that it is highly desirable that hop-grounds should be so situated as to enjoy the full advantage of the warm rays of the summer sun, yet, as an elevated exposure renders the plants, while young and tender, liable to serious injury from strong winds, and later in the season, when the vines have environed the tall poles and loaded them with a mass of luxuriant foliage, they are frequently blown down and broken, situations that are not so much exposed to the storm and tempest are generally preferred.

"Ground gravelly, sandy, and mixed with clay,
Is naughty for hops, any manner of way;
Or if it be mingled with rubbish and stone,
For dryness and barrenness let it alone.
Choose soil for the hop of the rottenest mould,
Well dunged and wrought, as a garden-plot should
Not far from the water (but not overflown),
This lesson well noted is meet to be known.
The sun in the south, or else southly and west,
Is joy to the hop as a welcomed guest;
But wind in the north, or else northerly-east,
To hop is as ill as a fray in a feast.
Meet plot for a hop-yard once found as is told,
Make thereof account as a jewel of gold;
Now dig it and leave it the sun for to burn,
And afterwards fence it to serve for that turn." *

When new hop-gardens or plantations of hops are first made, the ground should be stirred to a considerable depth during the autumn, and afterwards all the weeds, stones, and rubbish completely eradicated, and the soil reduced to a fine tilth. The usual season for planting is, according to the state of the weather, from the early part of March to the middle of April. Some persons, however, prefer the autumn—about the month of October; but at that season there frequently is some difficulty in procuring a sufficient stock of plants, which are only to be had in abundance where some old hop-garden is being dug up, since the proper plants are the cuttings from the younger shoots of the roots and branches of the old standards or stocks.

During the first season the newly-planted hop-ground makes but little show; the vines or young shoots are weak, and do not attain to any great height, so that poles are considered unnecessary until the following season, the custom being to twist them around each other some time during the early part of summer, and when thus twisted, to lay them on the hills that had previously been raised where the hops were planted. They require, however, considerable attention, for the weeds have to be kept down, the plants cleaned and carefully hoed, and some fine mould or compost distributed in the hills; and where there are failures, new plants have to be inserted, in order that the hop-garden, when in full bearing, should be as full, complete, and perfect as possible.

In the beginning of March, or sometimes in the latter part of February, in the second year, when the weather is favourable, the young hop-garden has to be carefully gone over; all the hills have to be examined, and the last year's vines or shoots have to be cut off within an inch or two of the original cuttings that were planted, when the plants are afterwards to be covered over with fine earth or compost. After this process has been judiciously performed, the next thing to be done is the insertion of three or four poles, as the case may seem to require, in each hill, and so firmly as to ensure their not being blown down by the wind; but during the second year, as the hop-vines do not yet attain their full growth nor yield a full crop of hops, poles of ten or eleven feet in length will commonly be found quite sufficient. In the third year, when the plants may be considered as having attained their full size, some kinds of hops (for there are several varieties) will require poles that stand fifteen or sixteen feet high: but it should be observed, that too

* R. B. Knight's 'Landscape,' b. iii.
† Tusser's 'May's Husbandry.'

* Tusser's 'June's Husbandry.'

long poles may be used, where the ground is not rich nor the plants luxuriant, for under such circumstances the vines would be induced to impoverish themselves by running to too great an extent, in which case the blossoms would be poor and the crop of hops scanty.

We shall not at present extend our observations upon the general culture of the hop. It may, however, here be remarked, that amongst all the general crops cultivated by the farmer, the profits arising from hops is the most uncertain and fluctuating, since the quantity yielded by most hop-grounds varies very considerably from year to year; whilst the prices that hops command in the market are fully as changeable and irregular.

"The hop for his profit I thus do exalt,
It strengtheneth drink and it favoureth malt;
And being well brewed, long kept it will last,
And drawing abide, if ye draw it not fast." *

As it is during the month of May that country dairying, that is, the manufacture of both butter and cheese, may be considered as coming into full operation, this appears a fit opportunity to bestow some attention upon so interesting a subject and one so immediately connected with agricultural pursuits. In populous communities, where a constant supply of milk is in demand during the whole year, the cowkeepers and dairymen are under the necessity of procuring cows newly calved, from time to time and at all seasons, in order to meet the demand; but on most dairy farms in the country the best managers contrive to have their cows calving in the spring, so that there may just be time to get the calves weaned or fattened before the cows are turned out to pasture. It is only in some particular districts that the attention of the farmer is exclusively directed to dairying; and even as regards dairies there are other considerations besides the making of butter and cheese, for the skimmed-milk and the butter-milk in one case, and the whey in the other, enable the farmers to rear a number of calves, or to maintain a still greater number of hogs and pigs. The English people are proverbially fond of cheese; few other nations consume near so much, and hence the demand is so great, that we have long been in the habit of importing considerable quantities from foreign countries, particularly Holland and the Netherlands. It is not, however, for any peculiar excellence that we import Dutch cheese, as it is far inferior to several sorts of our own, for the best quality of English cheese is probably hardly equalled by that of any other country. We likewise import large quantities of butter, because, as is the case in regard to cheese, the home supply is not equal to the regular demand. From Holland we import butter as well as cheese, but we are also supplied with large quantities from Ireland; and although a good deal of the Irish butter is of a very inferior description, it must be acknowledged that some of the Irish dairies produce butter of a quality that cannot be excelled.

Notwithstanding the almost universal manufacture of cheese of one quality or another, and in larger or smaller quantities (for there probably is not a county in the whole island of Great Britain in which some cheese is not made), there are nevertheless particular districts and localities that, more than any other, are noted for the cheese produced there. The space we can conveniently devote to this subject will allow us to introduce but a limited notice of the principal cheese-making districts, so that we will confine our observations to a few of those that appear to have acquired the highest reputation in the consuming marts, the populous towns and cities, and particularly in our hungry and ever-craving metropolis.

In order to avoid being considered as evincing an undue partiality for the cheese manufactured in any particular county or district, we will give a short alphabetical list of the kinds most generally known and inquired for, which will stand as follows, namely: Chedder, Cheshire, Derby, Gloucester (single and double), Lancashire, Stilton, Suffolk, and Wiltshire. But before we proceed to say a few words respecting the different sorts of cheese, or rather the cheese coming under different names, some notice appears desirable respecting the prevailing opinions that exist as to whence it is that the superior quality of the cheese is derived, or to what it is mainly to be attributed; for opinions vary so materially even upon this point, that this or that opinion can hardly be called general. Some persons are of opinion that the quality of the cheese materially depends upon the nature of the pasture where the cows feed, appearing to suppose that some peculiar herb or herbs may impart a richness and flavour to the milk of the cows, and hence the cheese will partake of the like superior qualities; for most persons are well aware that herbs or plants of a peculiar or powerful taste or odour, when eaten by cows, impart something of their taste and smell to the milk: thus wild garlic will impart both taste and smell to milk when cows are fed in pastures where it grows, though they eat of it but in very small quantities. But the common grasses that we usually find in most pastures, and upon which cattle most generally feed, impart no peculiar taste or smell to the milk; neither are such grasses and plants so numerous as to vary greatly between the pastures in one part of the country and those of another part, since several of them are indigenous and common to the pastures of every district of country in the kingdom. It therefore is scarcely probable that the quality of the cheese can mainly be attributed to the nature and quality of the grass upon which dairy cows pasture, but rather upon the quality of the milk (since the milk of cows varies greatly in richness) and the means afterwards adopted in the process of cheese-making. The quality of milk has been ascertained to depend materially upon the particular breed of the cow, the length of time from calving, the supply of pure water, the nature of her food, and some other matters of minor consideration. As general and necessary points in the management of the dairy, it may be observed that the cows should be milked at regular stated hours, when great care should be taken that their udders are perfectly emptied, else the quantity of milk will be diminished and its quality in some measure affected. When the weather is hot and sultry, they ought not to be chased or over driven; and in order to induce them to feed greedily (without which a regular and copious supply of milk cannot be expected), their pasture should be changed as frequently as circumstances will allow. But this can only be effected upon tolerably large farms, otherwise the enclosures would have to be of a size inconveniently small.

Mr. Lawrence and some other writers upon matters connected with dairying strongly recommend the breed of cows so well known under the name of "Suffolk Duns," as combining many of the most essential requisites for ensuring profit to the farmer, among which may be mentioned the large quantity as well as excellent quality of the milk yielded by cows of this breed. It is therefore evident that the fault does not rest with the Suffolk cows that the cheese made in that county is held in such low estimation in every part of the country; to prove which we need only quote the poet who thus characterises the cheese of his native county:—

"What can be its boast?
What but the common virtues of a post!
If drought o'ertake it faster than the knife,
Most fair it bids for stubborn length of life,
And, like the oaken shelf whereon 'tis laid,
Mocks the weak efforts of the bending blade;
Or in the hog-trough rests in perfect spite,
Too big to swallow, and too hard to bite." *

* Tusser's 'June's Husbandry.'

* Bloomfield's 'Farmer's Boy.'

The village of Chedder, from which Chedder-cheese derives its name, is situated in Somersetshire, at the foot of the southern range of the Mendip Hills, and near to the marshes that lie towards the south, extending nearly all the way to Glastonbury; but when the reputation of Chedder cheese was probably greater than it is at present, the cheese made through an extensive range of the county of Somerset was mostly sold under the name of Chedder. It formerly was the custom—and a very inconvenient one, we should suppose—for three or four of the dairies to unite their milk, and so make one large cheese; and though this custom is almost entirely laid aside, it probably originated the idea with the farmers of a neighbouring parish, who one day last summer drove the whole of their cows to a place previously fixed upon, where they were milked, and the milk afterwards converted into a cheese of immense size (estimated to weigh over half a ton) in order to present it as a present to our most gracious queen. There does not appear to be anything remarkable in the pasturage around Chedder, or indeed in any of the neighbouring parishes, where for the most part the ground is low, and rather inclined to be marshy, and at times overflowed. It is stated in the 'Library of Useful Knowledge,' under the head of "Management of Cattle," that the "celebrated Bridgewater cheese is made in the marshes between that town and Cross. Huntshill, South Brent, and East Brent are the three prime cheese-parishes." . . . "The land is rich and cool, and the pasturage not only old, but principally consisting of blade-grasses, with few flowers or odoriferous herbs to raise or produce that essential oil which is so detrimental to the manufacture of cheese." . . . "The present dairy-cow of this district is either entirely red, which shows her Devon origin; or red with a white face, which marks the Hereford cross; or spotted red and white,—and these last are generally preferred as the best milkers. They spring from the Durham blood on one side, and the farmers of this district are much indebted to the late Mr. Stone, of South Brent, who, at a considerable expense, introduced several bulls of the Durham breed."

Having thus noticed the cheese in a district of Somerset, we will next refer to that produced in an adjoining county, and known under the names of *single* and *double* Gloucester, the latter being generally considered as equalled by few, and scarcely excelled by any cheese that finds its way to the London market. Among the districts most noted for the excellence of their cheese in the part of the country here referred to, the Vale of Berkeley has long stood pre-eminent; but it has never been clearly defined to what it is that the superiority of the cheese produced here ought chiefly to be attributed. Certainly the peculiar breed of cows is not the influencing cause, for various breeds are often found on the same farm, while there are other dairies where cheese of an equal quality is produced from a stock of cows of an entirely different breed from the former. However, the cows are well attended to; the pastures are mostly old and good, while most of the farmhouses are as conveniently situated as possible, the pasture-ground surrounding them on all sides, so that the milk is but little disturbed prior to its being put with the rennet into the cheese-tub.

The mode of making the ordinary sorts of cheese does not materially differ, or at least in a much smaller degree than the qualities of the several kinds of cheese; so that, if we give a concise account of the usual process which is pursued in making *double* Gloucester, we hardly need to introduce the process which is followed elsewhere. Milk, when extracted from the cow's udder, is of a temperature something exceeding 90°; and when set, as it is termed, that is, when the rennet is introduced to the milk in the cheese-tub, the temperature should be about 85°; and that, if practicable, without the addition of milk that has been artificially heated. The matter used to impart colour to the cheese is inserted along with the rennet; after which the tub should remain uncovered until the curd is formed. After the curd has been cut to pieces, for a peculiar sort of knife should be employed, lest by breaking it with the hand some of the fatty matter should be squeezed out of it, it is then put into the vats and pressed pretty well until the whey is most of it out. The vat is filled as closely as possible, the cheese-cloth being placed over all, when a little hot water is poured over the cloth to harden the outside of the cheese. The curd is then turned out into the cloth, which is carefully folded over it, when the cheese is again returned into the vat for the purpose of being put into the press. Where there are many vats filled at once, they are all placed one upon another and subjected to the action of the same press, where they remain twenty-four hours, during which dry cloths are occasionally applied. In many dairies they adopt the plan of breaking the curd a second time; which, after being reduced as fine as practicable, is scalded with a mixture of water and whey. Although this may give a soft and uniform substance to the cheese (for which Gloucestershire cheese is so much noted), those opposed to this process are of opinion that the scalding and washing must necessarily extract a portion of the oleaginous part of the cheese. Be this as it may, we repeat that the uniform smooth and rich substance is one of the chief merits of the celebrated double-Gloucester cheese. At the expiration of twenty-four hours the cheeses are rubbed with salt, which operation is repeated for three or four days; when the cloths are finally removed, and the cheeses subjected to the press for a few days more, the length of time depending on the temperature of the weather and the size of the cheeses. They are then placed upon shelves, and turned twice a day for a few days, and then once a day for about a month, when they are clean scraped, and painted with annatto. Afterwards they are turned once or twice a week, until the season for selling arrives.

Single-Gloucester is sometimes made of skimmed milk, or of equal portions of skimmed and unskimmed milk, or occasionally of two portions of skimmed to one of unskimmed; hence it varies in quality very greatly, probably more than any other cheese that finds its way to the general markets. The greater portion, however, of the single-Gloucester that is to be met with among cheese-factors is decidedly superior to ordinary skimmed-milk cheese, though considerably inferior to the cheese generally made from *new* milk. In point of shape they are usually thinner than most other kinds of cheese.

We cannot afford space to notice the process pursued in the manufacture of Cheshire cheese; but the quality of this celebrated production is so generally known, that no praise of ours could add to its present high reputation. Indeed Cheshire cheese has long been in high repute, since Fuller, in his 'Worthies,' says, "This county doth afford the best cheese for quantity and quality, and yet their cows are not, as in other shires, housed in the winter; so that it may seem strange that the hardiest kine do make the tenderest cheese. Some essayed in vain to make the like in other places, though from thence they fetched both the kine and dairy-maid; it seems they should have fetched their ground too, wherein is surely some excellency in this kind, or else so good cheese will not be made." More modern writers attribute the peculiar flavour of the Cheshire cheese to the abundance of the saline particles in the soil of the county; and Dr. Campbell, in his 'Political Survey,' says, "That where the brine-springs most abound, the cheese is esteemed to be of the most superior quality:" however, this opinion is not generally credited.

Probably the most celebrated cheese that our island produces is the Stilton, for it not only commands the highest price in the market, but among the middle and

lower classes is looked upon as a sort of luxury. Though it has long been known as Stilton cheese, it is somewhat singular that none of it was originally manufactured in the vicinity of that town, for it was first made at Wimondham, in the Melton quarter of Leicestershire. "Mr. Paulet," says Marshall, "who resided at Wimondham, a relation of Cooper Thornhill, who formerly kept the Bell, at Stilton, in Huntingdonshire, on the great north road from London to Edinburgh, furnished his house with cream-cheese, which, being of a singularly fine quality, was coveted by his customers; and through the assistance of Mr. P., his customers were gratified, at the expense of half-a-crown a pound. In what country this cheese was manufactured was not publicly known, and hence it obtained the name of Stilton cheese. At length the place of producing it was discovered, and the art of producing it learned by other dairy-women of the neighbourhood. Dalby first took the lead, but it soon made its way to almost every village in that part of Leicestershire, as well as in the neighbouring villages of Rutlandshire."

The cows that at present supply the dairies where the Stilton cheese is made, are mostly 'long-horns,' or a mixed breed between the Lancashire cattle and the Durham 'short-horns.' The cows that supply the Derbyshire dairies are of the long-horned sort (though many Durhams have been introduced of late), but of a character somewhat differing from the original Craven breed, the Lancashire of the present day, or even from the 'Bakewells,' or *new* Leicestershire cattle. We mention these matters for the purpose of illustrating the fact, that the quality of the cheese produced in various parts of the country materially depends upon other causes in connection with the peculiar breed of cows from the milk of which the cheese is produced.

The quantity of cheese annually made on some of the best dairy-farms averages from two and a half to four hundredweight per cow. It has been ascertained that the number of cows kept in Cheshire somewhat exceeds 90,000; so that, taking the quantity of cheese produced by each cow at the lowest average, this county alone appears to yield the immense quantity of 11,250 tons a year! Respecting the cheese made in Lancashire and Wiltshire, we only need remark that the best cheese produced in the first-named county greatly resembles but is somewhat inferior to that manufactured in Cheshire, while the latter very much resembles and is scarcely inferior to the double-Gloucester.

Formerly it was the custom in many parts of the country to milk the ewes, particularly after weaning the lambs, when the milk for the most part was converted into cheese. This custom, however, is now nearly extinct from one end of the island to the other; for even in Scotland 'the ewe-milking,' once the burden of many a pastoral ditty, is but very little practised, and that in only a few particular localities. Thirty or forty years ago we remember when ewe-milk cheese was not only common in Scotland, but even in some of the English markets it then might be met with. It did not, however, appear to be a general favourite, being pungent and strong-flavoured; so that when it became the emulation of agriculturists to improve the breed of farm-stock generally, in order to effect this among sheep it was found not to be a good plan either to half-starve the lambs by robbing them of a portion of the milk of their dams, or to impoverish the ewes by continuing to milk them after the lambs had been weaned. In Tusser's time—the latter part of the sixteenth century—ewe-milking seems to have been quite common, at least in those counties to which his practical notices more particularly apply, namely, Essex, Suffolk, and some of the counties adjoining; for he says—

"At Philip and Jacob,* away with the lambs,
That thinkest to have any milk of their dams:

* St. Philip and St. James's day, May 1st.

At Lammas leave milking, for fear of a thing,
Lest (requiem eternam) in winter they sing.
To milk and to fold them is much to require,
Except ye have pasture to fill their desire;
Yet many by milking (such heed they do take),
Not hurting their bodies, much profit do make."

It cannot be wondered at, when such were the customs among sheep-farmers, that the breed of sheep of those days was greatly inferior to what it is at the present. May-day is some months too early to wean the lambs (unless under peculiar circumstances), and where the ewes were not only folded at night, but after the lambs had been weaned, continued to be milked during the summer season, it was not to be expected that they should have attained a high state of condition.

The Arabs, as well as the Eastern nations generally, still continue to make both butter and cheese from the milk of their ewes and goats. The butter, however, that ewe-milk yields is of a soft and oily nature, and by no means palatable, and altogether greatly inferior to that made from the milk of cows. M. de Brisson, in the remarkable account of his captivity among the Arab tribes of Africa, says, "When the butter which is obtained from the sheep and goats, and the camels' milk mixed, is skimmed, they put it into small skins, where it acquires a rancid smell, which, according to the taste of these barbarians, greatly enhances its value. The women use it for pomatum for their hair, and without this they would think something deficient in their dress."

The consumption of butter is probably more general even than that of cheese; for while the manufacture of the latter upon a large scale is in a great measure confined to certain counties or districts of country, butter-making is more or less pursued upon nearly every farm in the United Kingdom; and there are numerous instances where the families of cottagers manage to keep a cow, the milk and butter obtained from which assist materially in the family's maintenance. From the peculiar nature of butter being less portable than cheese, and unless salted, soon liable to become tainted, most of the larger towns and cities, and populous communities generally, are supplied from the surrounding neighbourhood. When the demand much exceeds the supply, it is, however, often packed in boxes and transported by canals or otherwise to a very considerable distance. But the very best summer butter loses most of its fine flavour in a few days; hence the desirableness of having a constant and frequent supply always at hand. The London market is supplied with this article from various parts of the country; from the counties adjacent, with that which is fresh, and from the more distant districts, with salt or firkin butter. In the manufacture of butter an equal degree of skill is not probably requisite as in cheese-dairying; but nevertheless, in order to have butter of the finest quality, it is necessary that the herbage should be sweet, and altogether free from rank weeds and noxious plants. The cows should be supplied with an abundance of pure water; a cool and roomy dairy-house should be conveniently situated; and great order and cleanliness should reign in every department connected with dairy-farming.

The practical and systematic farmer, notwithstanding the regularity to which the business of his farm is subjected, owing to the irregularity of the seasons, and the stated periods for every department of farm labour, occasionally finds it against his interest to keep in employment the number of labourers for whom he at other times has plenty of work. Even during the month of genial May, when the preceding month has been a favourable one for spring work, this is far from being one of the busiest of the year; since what may technically be called the business of spring is nearly over by the earlier part of this month; though the plough is still kept pretty constantly employed, for, in addition to the fallow-lands, the turnip-ground has now to be got into a

state of readiness for sowing; though in most parts of the country the seed is not sown before the first or second week in June.

It must be here understood that the common sorts (for there are several varieties) are referred to, for when the season is favourable the farmers commonly find the middle or 20th of May the best time for sowing Swedish turnips; since if they are sown much earlier they are very apt to run to seed; and if much later, they seldom succeed so well. In some parts of the country, instead of sowing the seed of the Swedish turnip earlier than the common ones, the farmers provide themselves with plants from beds sown early in the spring, and having got their ground ready, transplant out their Swedes in this way, at a period even later than that of their common turnip season. This plan is not, however, generally to be commended, but it answers where the early sown crops may have failed, or where it has not been convenient or practicable to get the land ready at the usual season.

In the colder and later districts potato-planting is not completed before the middle of May; and where the mangel-wurzel is cultivated, that valuable crop has to be hoed and attended to, as also have the carrot and cabbage crops. Under the old system of agriculture, particularly in the dale districts, the barley seed-time took place in the latter part of this month or the beginning of June; and if the summer proved not unfavourable for the ripening of the crops, the farmers expected to reap them in August. There was an old adage among these farmers to the effect—"that barley ought to be twice in the sacks in eleven weeks." But this was at the period when barley-bread was in common use in many parts of the country; and the recently cut barley was considered as making the best barley-bannocks. The districts where barley-bread was once so generally consumed were never noted for producing that grain of a good quality, for it was mostly of the four-rowed sort, commonly called 'bigg.' Besides what was intended for bread, it used to be the custom for the farmers to have a moderate quantity annually converted into malt, to accomplish which most of the small grist-mills had malt-kilns attached to them for the purpose of accommodating their regular customers. But when it became necessary for the state to impose heavy duties upon malt, this custom in a measure ceased, and the consequence was that the quantity of home-brewed malt liquor became greatly diminished, and in many instances entirely disappeared.

There is a species of farm produce which was once pretty generally cultivated in many parts of the country, but which at present can hardly be reckoned as coming within the general products of our farms, that we will here notice, since the proper time for sowing it is during the latter part of the present month: we allude to buckwheat, or *polygonum fagopyrum*.

> "In May is good sowing thy buck or thy brank,
> That black is as pepper, and smelleth as rank;
> It is to thy land as a comfort or muck,
> And all thing it maketh as fat as a buck.
>
> Sow buck after barley, or after thy wheat,
> A peck to the rood (if the measure be great)
> Three earths see ye give it, and sow it above,
> And harrow it finely, if buck ye do love."*

Buckwheat, or brank, as it used sometimes to be called, is at present so little cultivated, that but few of our farmers are acquainted with it except by name; hence we will here introduce a short description of it. Though it used generally to be considered as a sort of corn, properly speaking it is not so, nor does it even remotely resemble any of the esculent kinds of grain. It possesses this peculiarity, however, that it will thrive in almost any soil; even on barren sands it may be raised where no other sort of grain will grow: but upland light and dry soils seem to suit it the best. The plants will sometimes attain the height of two or two and a half feet; the leaves while young are of a roundish form, but afterwards attain the shape of the leaves of the ivy, but are remarkably soft. The stalks are hollow and weak, generally green, but sometimes inclining to red. Each plant throws off many collateral branches, all of which bear numerous flowers of a very light purple colour approaching to white. The seed, when fully ripe, is of a triangular shape, nearly black, and very much resembling beech-nuts, but considerably smaller. Though Tusser complains of its rank smell, when the summer breeze passes over a field of blossoming buckwheat an aromatic fragrance is imparted to it—not so powerful as that of a field of blossoming beans, but one that is far from being rank or disagreeable. The blossoms are peculiarly attractive to bees; and in countries where the farmers cultivate whole fields of buckwheat, the bee-keepers are in the habit of sending their hives to those fields during the time the plants are in flower, commonly part of July and August, during which the bees are unceasing in extracting sweets from the pale blossoms, the honey produced in this way being much esteemed, particularly for its pure transparency. On many parts of the Continent buckwheat has long been cultivated for household use; and at one period it was so generally grown in France, that in other countries it frequently went by the name of *French* wheat. But in England it never seems to have been in common use for bread or cakes, nor considered among the esculent kinds of grain; for it was either cut in a green state and given to milch cows; or being permitted to ripen, its seed was used to feed poultry or hogs, though occasionally mixed with oats in the place of beans, and given to horses. At other times it was, and very advantageously, we are induced to believe, when in its fullest bloom, ploughed under in order to act as a manure, the stalks and leaves being of so succulent and tender a nature that, when buried under the furrow, they require but a short period before they become totally decayed. From our own knowledge of the advantage of raising buckwheat crops in other countries, we cannot but express our surprise that the culture of it is so little attended to in this country. On poor sandy soils, in parts of the country so situated as to make ordinary manures scarce and dear, probably a better mode could not be hit upon for improving their condition than that of sowing them with buckwheat, from April to August according to circumstances, and afterwards ploughing in the crop at the most favourable opportunity. In North America, in our own colonies, but more particularly in the eastern and northern parts of the United States, this species of grain is extensively cultivated, and generally found to be a prolific crop. There, however, it is greatly esteemed by the inhabitants when ground fine and made into cakes, particularly during the winter season. The flour is mixed with water until it forms a batter of moderate consistency, when it is left to ferment a little, but not to become actually sour, and then it is poured upon the griddle somewhat like pancakes, or rather resembling the cakes made of oatmeal in Lancashire and some of the adjoining districts, and commonly called 'riddle-bread.' In the interior of the country, in most of the settlers' houses, that is, during the cold weather, the vessel containing the batter for these cakes, and the griddle on which to bake them, may be seen in a corner of the fireplace from one week's end to another, the custom being to have hot cakes morning, noon, and night. But buckwheat cakes are not confined to the rude domicile of the poorer or more rustic part of the community, since the hotel and tavern keepers in the towns and larger villages find buckwheat cakes in constant demand while the cold season continues; and indeed there are few American families that do not patronise them, when they have an opportunity of getting them. When properly made, they

* Tusser's 'May's Husbandry.

are full of eyes and spongy, something like our crumpets; and the most popular mode of eating them is to have them brought to table as hot as possible from the griddle, when they are to be well buttered; to which is commonly added fine honey in the comb.

Besides the food that buckwheat thus supplies to the inhabitants of those countries, vast quantities are used for hogs, cattle, poultry, &c.; but though swine can be fattened upon buckwheat meal, for they eat it greedily, the pork is found to be soft and oily; hence it is the almost invariable custom among those who fatten hogs, during two or three weeks immediately before their being slaughtered, to change their food from buckwheat to Indian corn, than which there is probably no grain in any part of the world that makes the pork or bacon fatter or harder or of a superior flavour. When buckwheat is allowed to ripen, the straw is nearly worthless. In America it is usually thrown upon the dunghill; since nothing short of absolute starvation will induce cattle to feed upon it. Inferior soils will commonly yield thirty or thirty-five bushels per acre, without a particle of manure, and with very little tillage or attention.

There is another sort of farm produce—for we can scarcely call it grain—that we will shortly notice, for we entertain a somewhat similar opinion respecting it that we do of buckwheat, namely, that were it more cultivated in particular parts of this country, the farmers would find it to their advantage; we refer to millet, of which there are a few varieties. The same may be said of millet as regards buckwheat, that is, it is now much less cultivated than it was formerly, and much less amongst us than it is in some of the continental countries, where it is not only given to farm-stock, poultry, &c., but is ground into meal and used for household purposes. A writer* in the 'Museum Rusticum' says—"What grain is there which, in the open field, will yield a return of one hundred and fifty for one, and which at the same time will sell so well, for in price it is on a footing with wheat? It is true it yields a heavy, crumbly, and indifferent bread, but if it is made into pottage, it is very excellent, very nourishing, and of exquisite flavour. Not only M. Tschiffeli's servants and workmen were very fond of millet thus prepared, but he himself prefers it to the best rice." The same writer goes on to say that it does not impoverish the soil, but this, from the nature of the plant, we consider a very doubtful case, since it strikes its roots deep into the ground, and produces a large quantity of straw. On indifferent soils millet will sometimes yield upwards of fifty bushels of seed to the acre, though this of course may be considered a large crop. When permitted to ripen, the straw is greedily consumed by cattle; and when cut in a green state, there is hardly any species of artificial grass upon which farm-stock feed with greater avidity. As it is so rapid of growth, sometimes growing three and a half or four feet high in a couple of months, it thus affords a most luxuriant crop for stall-feeding, such as is not to be surpassed. Probably the chief reason of its being so little cultivated in this country is owing to the opinion that generally prevails of its being a great impoverisher of the soil. But opinions amongst agriculturists are not always based upon the surest foundations—a long practical experience backed by scientific knowledge; so that when we find millet still maintaining its high repute in countries where it has long been cultivated, we cannot help wishing that more practical knowledge had been brought to bear upon the subject in this country. The millet commonly cultivated was originally brought from India; but there is a larger sort that we occasionally meet with, which was introduced into Europe from Africa.

There are two other agricultural products that once were cultivated in this country to a much greater extent than they are at present; we refer to flax and hemp. In our island the cultivation of flax has long been falling off, until, at the present day, it may fairly be considered as one of those crops that do not materially interest the farming community. With respect to Ireland the case is different, for there the concentration of the linen manufacture renders the cultivation of flax a matter of more importance. In the grazing districts in England, on many farms may still be seen the remains of holes or pits wherein the farmers were wont to steep their flax, and many a hoary octogenarian remembers to have witnessed in his boyhood the then ordinary operations of steeping and rotting flax. Long before the cotton manufactures had so very greatly encroached on the linen trade, the cultivation of flax had begun to fall off; for the farmers discovered that more profitable crops could be raised in its place, and the farmers' wives and daughters preferred spinning the better dressed flax imported from foreign countries. For several years subsequent to the period alluded to, most families resident in the country continued to spin annually as much imported flax as supplied them with linen, and that without neglecting their household duties; but in consequence of the improvements in machinery connected with our manufactures generally, and hence the cheapness of both cotton and linen goods, family flax-spinning was almost wholly laid aside in all parts of this country. In the sixteenth century spinning seems to have been one of the employments of the morning, as in later years the spinning-wheel was more commonly set going in the afternoon, and particularly during the long winter evenings, or after supper; for Tusser, in his 'Huswifery's Morning Works,' says—

> "Good husband without it is needful there be,
> Good huswife within was as needful as he.
> Cast dust into yard,
> And spin and go card."

It was the custom in some of the southern counties to sow a portion of the flax-seed during the autumn, and the remainder in the spring; but although many were of opinion that the seed yielded by the autumnal sowing was superior to the seed of that sowed in April, the fibre of that plant was allowed to be somewhat inferior. Notwithstanding that the cultivation of flax has fallen off so greatly, we still import large quantities of flax-seed, as well as of the cakes (oil-cakes) made of the compressed seed, much of the latter being used in the fattening of farm-stock.

Flax grows best upon loamy soils, particularly those that border upon rivers and streams, though, if the seasons are not too dry and the soil reduced to a fine tilth, it may be grown upon higher grounds with a fair prospect of success. With regard to the culture of hemp, we may observe, that the best situation for it is upon soft and rich loams, particularly alluvial meadows, or where occasional overflowings deposit rich vegetable matter. The cultivation of hemp has long been considered of so much importance to the welfare of the state, that the British legislature has at different periods offered premiums in order to encourage its culture, not only in this country, but in several of our colonial possessions, particularly those of North America, we requiring so large and constant a supply of cordage in our marine and naval departments. The offered premiums have not, however, succeeded in extending its growth in this country; not that we cannot grow it here, but during times of peace we can import it from Russia and other countries at a price so much below what our farmers can produce it for, that they cannot of course be expected to cultivate it as a general crop. Being a much tenderer plant than flax, it requires to be sown later in the spring, commonly during May, and although the seed does not immediately spring up, its growth is so rapid afterwards, that it attains the height of five or six feet, and afterwards ripens its seed early in the autumn.

* Mr. Burton

COTTAGER'S GARDEN CALENDAR.

[From Wilds on 'Cottage Building.']

Catalogue of Vegetables.	January.		February.		March.		April.		May.		June.		July.		August.		Sept.		October.		Nov.		Dec.		Seeds or sets.	Produce.
	work.	h.	work.	h.	work.	h.	work.	h.	work.	h.	wk.	h.	work.	h.	work.	h	wk.	h.	work.	h.	wk.	h.	wk.	h.		
Potatoes	..	..	dig / plant	6	..	..	..	..	hoe and earth up twice	1½	rea.	..	—	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	s. d. 0 6	4½ bush.
Radishes	..	..	sow	..	..	..	ready	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0 1	20 l. bd.
Peas and Beans	dig / sow	4½	earth up	½	ear. up	½	stick / ..	½ / ..	ready do.	..	—	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1 0 / 0 6	7 pecks / 8 pecks
Early Barnes Cabbage	..	..	earth up	½	..	..	ready	..	—	..	—	..	..	..	sow	½	trsp.	½	man. dg. plt	3½	..	..	..	..	0 6	200 cab.
Dwarf marrow Peas / Windsor Beans	..	..	dig / sow	1½	ear. up	½	stick	½	..	..	..	..	ready do.	..	—	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1 2 / 0 8	8 pecks / 6 pecks
Onions					sow	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	rea.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0 6	2 bush.
Spinage					do.	½	..	..	..	rea.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0 2	
Early Turnip	..	..	digging	4	do.	½	..	..	ready	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0 1	
Lettuce					do.	½	..	..	..	rea.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0 2	
Scarlet Runners					..	..	..	..	sow	1	stk.	½	—	..	rea.	..	—	..	—	..	..	..	..	..	0 9	
Parsnips / Carrots	dig	10	sow / do.	1 / 2	—	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	tk. up / do.	1 / 2	—	..	—	..	0 2 / 0 4	4 bush. / 12 bush.
Barley	..	..	..	..	dg. so.	6	roll	1	roll	1	hoe	1	..	..	reap.	2	..	..	thras	5	dig	12	..	..	0 9	4 bush.
Potatoes	..	..	..	..	..	..	dg. plt.	7	hoe	2	ear.	1	earth	1	..	..	..	..	tk. up	8	..	..	dig	10	1 6	25 bush.
Sugarloaf Cabbage	..	..	..	..	dg. plt.	3	earth	½	earth	½	rea.	..	—	..	sow	½	..	..	trspl.	½	..	..	dig	2	0 6	220 cab.
Savoy Cabbage	..	..	sow	½	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	dg. plt.	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	rea.	..	0 3	1 0 cab.
Green curled Horsecole	..	..	ready	..	sow	½	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	dg. plt.	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0 3	100
Cucumbers	..		..	..	..	..	..	..	sow	½	..	..	..	..	ready	..	—	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0 2	90 cuc.
Leeks	..	..	..	..	sow	½	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	dg. plt.	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0 2	
Potherbs, &c	dig	½	..	..	..	..	plant	3	—	..	—	..	—	..	—	..	—	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1 0	
Mercury	..	..	..	..	—	..	—	..	—	..	—	..	..	..	..	..	..	plt.	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Hours mthly.		18½		15½		12½		13½		6½		2½		2		4½		1½		20		12		12	11 2	

It will be seen in the foregoing table, that in no one week in the year is there above 5 hours' work to be bestowed on the garden, and in some weeks not 1 hour's work; so it should all be done without ever losing one day's labour. The calculation is for rather more than a quarter of an acre.

Abbreviations.—h. hours; wk. work; ear. earth up; dg. dig; plt. plant; rea. ready; stk. stake up; trsp. transplant; man. manure; tk. take up; thras. thrash; bd. bundle; cab. cabbage; cuc. cucumbers.

MONTHLY CALENDAR.—JUNE—Sixth Month.

Day of the Month and Week.	Day of the Year.	Sundays and Remarkable Days.	Sun rises.	Eq. Time. Clock aft. Sun.	Sun sets.	Moon's Age.	Moon rises.	Moon sets.
			h. m.	m. s.	h m.		h. m.	h. m.
1 M	153	. . .	3 50	2 30	8 5	1·2	4m 7	10a19
2 Tu	154	. . .	3 50	2 21	8 6	2·2	5 22	11 4
3 W	155	. . .	3 49	2 11	8 7	3·2	6 49	11 34
4 Th	156	Camb. East. Term div.n.	3 48	2 1	8 8	4·2	8 18	11 55
5 F	157	*King of Hanov. born* 1771	3 48	1 51	8 9	5·2	9 43	morn.
6 S	158	Oxford East. Term ends	3 47	1 40	8 10	6·2	11 5	0 10
7 Su	159	*Whit Sunday.*	3 47	1 29	8 11	☽	0a20	0 23
8 M	160	Whit Monday.	3 46	1 18	8 12	8·2	1 34	0 35
9 Tu	161	Whit Tuesday.	3 46	1 6	8 13	9·2	2 47	0 46
10 W	162	*Em. Week.* Oxford Trin.	3 45	0 55	8 13	10·2	4 0	0 58
11 Th	163	*St. Barnabas* [Trin. beg.	3 45	0 43	8 14	11·2	5 13	1 12
12 F	164	. . .	3 45	0 31	8 15	12·2	6 26	1 29
13 S	165	. . . .	3 44	0 18	8 15	13·2	7 35	1 53
14 Su	166	*Trinity Sunday.*	3 44	0 6	8 16	14·2	8 36	2 25
15 M	167	. . .	3 44	bef. 7	8 16	○	9 26	3 9
16 Tu	168	Trinity Term ends.	3 44	0 19	8 17	16·2	10 3	4 6
17 W	169	. . .	3 44	0 32	8 17	17·2	10 30	5 13
18 Th	170	Corpus Christi.	3 44	0 45	8 18	18·2	10 51	6 26
19 F	171	. . .	3 44	0 58	8 18	19·2	11 6	7 42
20 S	172	*Accession of Q. Vic.* 1837	3 44	1 11	8 18	20·2	11 19	8 58
21 Su	173	1 *S. aft. Trin.* Longst D. / *Q. V. proc.* Sum. Quar. b.	3 44	1 24	8 18	21·2	11 31	10 15
22 M	174	. . .	3 45	1 37	8 18	☾	11 43	11 32
23 Tu	175	. . .	3 45	1 49	8 19	23·2	11 56	0a51
24 W	176	*MIDSUMMR. DAY.* / *Nat. of St John Baptist.*	3 45	2 2	8 19	24·2	morn.	2 15
25 Th	177	. . .	3 46	2 15	8 19	25·2	0 12	3 43
26 F	178	. . .	3 46	2 28	8 19	26·2	0 33	5 14
27 S	179	. . .	3 47	2 40	8 19	27·2	1 3	6 43
28 Su	180	2 *S. aft. Trin. Q. Vic. cr.*	3 47	2 53	8 18	28·2	1 48	7 59
29 M	181	*St. Peter.*	3 48	3 5	8 18	●	2 53	8 54
30 Tu	182	. . .	3 48	3 17	8 18	0·9	4 16	9 31

Meteorological Averages.

	Ins.
Barometer.	
Mean height	30·020
Highest	30·160
Lowest	29·600
Hygrometer.	°
Mean dew-point	50·7
Highest	70
Lowest	35
Mean dryness	8·0
Mean greatest do. of day	16
Greatest dryness	25
Thermometer.	
Mean temperature	58·7
Highest	90
Lowest	37
Radiation.	
Mean great. of Sun	39·9
Greatest power	65·0
Mean cold of terrest.	5·2
Greatest ditto	17·0
	Ins.
Mean qty. of rain	1·830
Mean of evap.	3·760

Table of the Winds.

	Days.	Dew-P.
N.	5	49° ·5
N.E.	6½	49 ·5
E.	2	56
S.E.	4	57
S.	1	62]
S.W.	3½	56
W.	3	52
N.W.	5	50 ·5

SUNDAY LESSONS.

June MORNING.

7 Wt. S. Dt. 16 to v. 18, Ac. 10, v. 34
14 Tr. 8. Gen. 1 Mt. 3
21 1 af T, Josh. 10 Lk 5
28 2 „ Judg. 4 „ 11

EVENING.

June 7 Isaiah 11.. Acts 19 to v. 21
„ 14 Gen. 18..1 John 5
„ 21 Josh. 23..Galat. 5
„ 28 Judg. 5..Ephes. 5

THE MOON'S CHANGES.

First Quart. 7th day, 1h. 17m. mn.
Full . . . 15th day, 2h. 49m. mn.
Last Quart. 22nd day, 11h. 31m. aft.
New . . . 29th day, 1h. 59m. aft.

Day of Mth.	Length of Day.	Day's increase	Day break.	Twil. ends.	Sun's Semi-di.
1	h. m. 16 15	h. m. 8 30	No real Night, but constant Twilight.		
6	16 23	8 38			
11	16 29	8 44			
16	16 33	8 48			
21	16 34	8 49			
26	16 33	D. d. e. 1			
1			15' 47"	15 47	15 45
6				15 47	15 46
11				15 46	15 46
16				15 46	15 45
21				15 46	15 45
26				15 47	15 46

*** The Office of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge is at 59, Lincoln's Inn Fields.

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